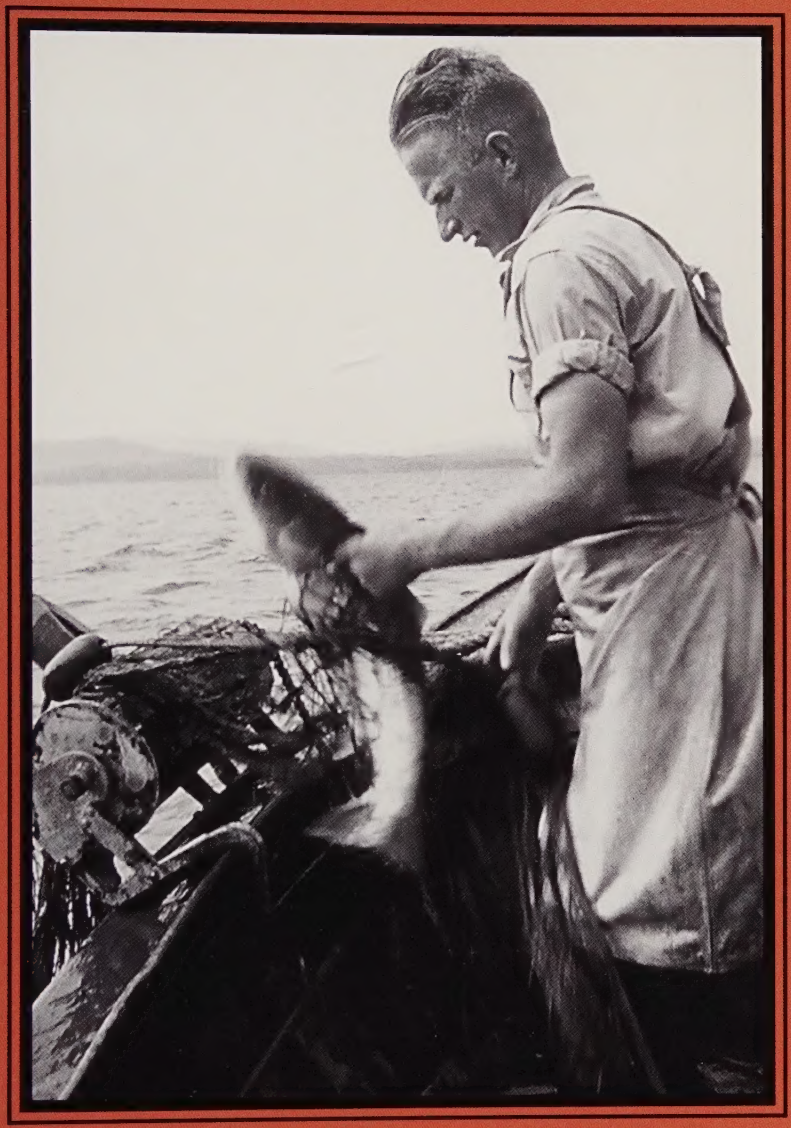
Clatsop County Historical Society Quarterly

CUMTUX



Vol. 41, No. 3 — Summer 2021

In This Issue . . .

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Shift over. Time to go home.

Traffic stopped each day as crowds of Bumble Bee cannery workers in their white outfits and headscarves hurried across Marine Drive to the Superette grocery store to load up on lunch items. When the workday was over, traffic was stopped again as they crossed the road to head on home. Did we all assume that tuna and salmon would continue forever to furnish a living wage for thousands of hard workers? No longer do we rely on the bounty of the river and the ocean to the extent we once did. Memories of those days are receding further into the past. The writers in this issue of Cumtux recall what the fishing industry meant to their lives.

Rea Raihala Christoffersson recalls the times each year when her family lived in a "scow village" on the Columbia River and the people whose lives intersected with theirs, an idyllic time a few lucky others shared.

The second installment of John E. Seeborg's three-part story in this issue tells how he as a young boy contributed to the welfare of his family during the Depression and the way in which the Union Fishermen's Co-operative Packing Company and the other canneries helped too.

Paavo Fellman, the younger son of Werner and Helena Kastel Fellman, wrote about growing up in Astoria. Werner Fellman's business motto, "We do not misrepresent," might have been a motto for his honesty through times of great troubles. For no fault of his own, he lost all he had and moved away and began again to build a successful business. For his work as an honorary Finnish consul for the west coast, he was knighted into the Order of the White Rose, 1st class of Finland. His biography appears in Gaston's Centennial History of Oregon (Vol. 2) and Fred Lockley's History of the Columbia River Valley from the Dalles to the Sea, the most celebrated Finn to live in Clatsop County.

This issue ends with Laura Torres' story of a new cannery worker's time on the line.

—The Editor

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CUMTUX

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Willie Raihala picking up his net using a power-assist roller.
Image courtesy of Rea Raihala

CUMTUX: Chinook jargon:
"To know…to inform"

Life in a Scow Village:
Gillnetting "Out on the River" in the 1950s.

By Rea Raihala Christoffersson
with anecdotes and photos from Ray Raihala, Rod Raihala, Karen Raihala Burke, and Steve Burke

In the 1950s our family had a summer ritual. We towed our float house from a sheltered slough to the middle of the Columbia to spend part of the summer "out on the river."

My dad was a gillnet fisherman, and our home was part of a "scow village" that included six floating buildings. Our "neighborhood" had three float houses belonging to my uncle, Willie Raihala and his family; Ed Eriksen; and my dad, Reno Raihala, and our family. We were all from Brownsmead. The village also had three fish scows that received and iced fish to be picked up later by cannery launches.

Float House Life

Our float houses were not fancy. They were built on large, four-tiered platforms consisting of floating logs, beams, stringers (joists), all topped with wide, unpainted planks that formed the deck.

There was a central "great room" that served as kitchen, dining, and living room. There was one bedroom to each side, with a bathroom off one of the bedrooms. A storage room was reached from a covered porch in front of the entrance. We had a wire-fenced "yard" to keep us kids safely corralled when we were little. Beyond the yard was a net rack for drying and repairing nets.

The houses were moored to pilings, or dolphins (clusters of pilings), near a group of small islands north of Knappa. A row of connected logs, called boomsticks, linked the buildings.

As children, we would often stand in our fenced yard and yell across to our cousins, "We wanna come over and play!" Eventually, the racket would wear one of our mothers down, and she would make the precarious trip along the logs to deliver a kid to the other house for a play date.

The walk along slippery logs was precarious. Karen Raihala Burke, Willie's daughter, recalls that her mother Lila once fell into the river while carrying her over to our place. Aili, my mom, rushed to the rescue. (After that episode, our fathers constructed safer, plank walkways among the houses and fish scows.)

Photo by Lila Raihala

Float house and fish scow, with gillnet boats. North Island, May 1938.

Most of our days lacked such excitement. However, life on the water was usually very peaceful. Karen remembers, "The float house would gently move when boats went past." This motion, plus the river's quiet sloshing, rocked us to sleep at night.

Lights, Water, Sewage

In earlier years, our house had a WinCharger windmill on the roof connected to an electricity generator and a large bank of storage batteries. There had been a propane (Flame-O) tank to operate a gas stove and refrigerator. In addition, there had also been a washing machine with a gas-operated engine.

Such off-grid systems were popular in rural America in the 1930s and 40s, but by the 1950s, they were old and hard to maintain, so we dismantled them. Consequently, life on our float house became even more primitive.

We had no electricity. Cooking and heating water was done on a classic, old-fashioned range that had been converted from burning wood to oil. The stovetop worked fine, but the oven was very erratic. This range also heated the house. Also, we had an auxiliary one-burner camp stove that used pressurized white gas (naphtha).

We used an old-fashioned icebox to chill milk and other perishables; we replenished this from the ice deliveries brought by cannery launches. We brought our drinking water in a large keg from our land house and augmented it with rainwater. Our drinking water was stored in a large ceramic crock with a dipper. We also pumped river water into a tank on the roof. This water was used for cleaning but was

STEVE BURKE AND KAREN RAIHALA BURKE

FLOAT HOUSE WITH NET RACK.

not potable, and it had to be boiled for washing dishes.

We pumped the river water by hand to a tank on the roof. The pump on the porch was cantankerous. My brother, Ray Raihala, remembers, "It had to be hand-primed by pouring water into a hole on the top. If you started pumping before putting the cap on, water would gush back out of the filler hole." When the barrel on the roof was full, it overflowed, sounding like rain. Then you knew the pumping job was done until the next refill was needed.

The wind provided our air conditioning, and the river was our sewer. Karen Raihala Burke recalls fishing for suckers through the privy hole. (However, we understood these fish were not to be eaten.)

I used a treadle sewing machine to make school clothes. To press the seams, I used flatirons heated on the range. A mantle lamp with a Victorian-style shade lighted the great room at night. This lamp could be placed on a table or hung from the ceiling and gave enough light for reading and drawing. We took a Coleman lantern to walk to the fish scows at night to receive fish deliveries. We read by kerosene lamps in the bedrooms.

It was Ray's job to fill the lamps. He remembers once putting white gas into a kerosene lamp by mistake. The flame sputtered strangely, so he investigated and quickly blew out the lamp and poured out the white gas, narrowly avoiding a conflagration.

There was no official postal service on the river, but we usually traveled back to our land house once or twice a week to send and collect mail. But, in a pinch, we gave letters to the cannery launch captains to mail for us. This trip took about an

hour each way—forty-five-minutes by boat, a short transfer to a car, and then a ten-minute drive home. While on land, we also did some grocery shopping and laundry.

Fish head mulligan and other delights

People who visited us out on the river always noticed how the fresh air increased their appetites. Almost immediately after boarding the boat, we broke out the Fig Newtons and M&Ms.

But we couldn't live on Fig Newtons alone, so part of my job was cooking. We brought meat, vegetables, and canned goods with us, but our staple diet was mostly fresh abundant fish. We often made "fish head mulligan," a version of a Finnish stew with salmon, onions, and potatoes, seasoned with allspice, and enriched with canned milk. The salmon head imparted delicious flavor to this dish, and Ray and I used to quarrel over who got to eat the salmon eyes and cheeks. Fortunately, there were two of each.

Sturgeon had to be a certain size to sell. After my dad had thrown back dozens of undersized sturgeons on a drift, he would bring one home. The fish might be illegal to sell, but we figured no one could prosecute us if we ate the evidence. My list of signature dishes soon grew to include fried sturgeon, sturgeon chowder, and sturgeon salad. Bread often meant Finnish crispbread, which held up better than standard loaves in the moist river air.

For summer birthdays we often tried to make birthday cakes. The oven on our old range heated very unevenly, so these cakes were always lopsided, but they tasted good. Once when my aunt, Frances Oja, came to visit, she brought cream, fresh strawberries from her garden, and a manual ice cream freezer. With ice and rock salt from the fish receiving scow, we made delicious ice cream, which was a special treat.

What Did We Do for Fun?

Life on the river was simple, but I don't remember feeling deprived. Leisure activities consisted of reading, drawing, knitting, and playing musical instruments. I recall memorizing the Cyrillic (Russian) alphabet. Ray remembers sitting on the porch roof and learning to play the guitar, and I also used the roof to practice my flute. (Perhaps our parents suggested this venue to gain some peace and quiet.)

Sometimes we'd row a duck boat over to a muddy beach on a nearby island, and we could go swimming when the water was slack. On the Fourth of July, we shot fireworks out over the river.

As this was long before the age of cell phones, there was no phone service out on the Columbia. We did have radio reception, of a sort. Rod Raihala, Willie's son, recalls

that his father, for a while, hooked up a car radio to a six-volt battery. Our family eventually got a transistor radio—then we could listen to music, news, and weather reports. However, we received very few stations, and their playlists were limited, so we got awfully tired of hearing *The Battle of New Orleans and Mule Skinner Blues.*

Occasionally friends and relatives who owned boats would come to visit us on the float house, and once in a while, we were allowed to bring friends out for a short stay.

In general, however, socializing meant having coffee with fishermen or people from nearby float houses. "Coffee an'" was a hospitality staple. ("An," short for "and," usually meant coffee cake or cookies). On the last day of the season, a brown bag of Four Roses bourbon would come out from under the sink, and each fisherman would be invited to drink a tot, either neat or in his coffee.

Gillnet Boats

In those days, most gillnet boats were bow-pickers, which meant fishermen laid out their nets from the stern and stood in the bow to pull the heavy, wet nets out of the water, with the aid of a motorized roller. These boats had six- or eight-cylinder, internal combustion engines made by marine suppliers such as Kermath or car companies such as Chrysler. These burned "boat gas," which had fewer additives and was cheaper than "car gas." (When times were tough, some boat gas mysteriously wound up in cars.)

An exposed engine took up most of a gillnet boat's cabin, along with required safety equipment such as life jackets and a fire extinguisher. To one side, there was usually a narrow bunk with a mattress or sleeping bag. Rod Raihala remembers, "The fishermen were good at snatching fifteen-minute cat naps while their boat drifted along near their nets."

About 1960, "stern pickers" with net reels at the back of the boat began to make their appearance. And some fishermen bought new devices called depth-finders, which showed the distance to the river bottom.

The Gillnetters' Self-regulating System

About fifteen gillnetters fished on our part of the Columbia. Some bought rights in a "drift"—a loose organization that fished in one part of the river, collaborating to share information and keep the area free of snags. Those without drift rights fished on the periphery of this area.

We were on the Brownsport Drift near North Island (which has since disappeared due to erosion). Other parts of our drift included the beach located northeast of that island and the Pole Hole, downstream toward Svensen Island. Some fishermen also fished in Grand Slough east

of North Island and in the Prairie Channel near Minaker Slough.

About every two weeks, the fishermen who had drift rights would come to our float house to "draw numbers." This meant picking a poker chip with a number written on it out of a coffee can. Much fuss was made of shaking the can in hopes of getting a "good" number. Part of my job was to write up the rotation and give a carbon copy of the list to each fisherman.

Over the years, the fishermen in our area included: Clarence "Snooky" Barendse, Orville Darling, Ed and Juan Ericksen, Eugene "Slim" Mendenhall, Jafet Nousson, Willie Raihala (whose place was later taken by Ken Seloover and his son, Robert), Reno Raihala (who also worked as a fish receiver), Wagner Smith, Roy Takalo, Mervyn Tuom, William "Sharkey" Westerholm and his sons Jon and Jerry, plus others.

Once the rotation order had been established, before each drift, the fishermen would wait at an agreed-upon meeting point called "towhead." From here, each fisherman would lay out his net, drift along beside it, and then pick it up. A defined amount of time was left between one fisherman's start and the next. After each drift, the fishermen would shift up one position in the rotation until they were back to their original positions. At this point, there was another number-drawing.

If any fisherman tried to horn in on a drift out of turn, other fishermen could "cork" him, which meant laying out their nets directly in front of his so that he could not catch any fish. This was rarely necessary.

Getting Fish to the Canneries

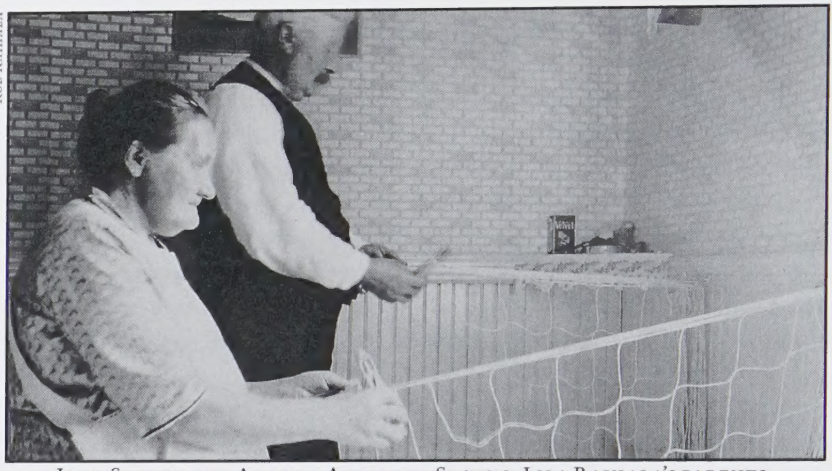
The fish were kept in a fish locker on each boat. Superstition dictated that a fisherman should not open his fish locker until he caught the first fish of a drift.

Karen Raihala Burke recalls asking her dad (in her third-generation Finnish): "Tulleko kala, Isä?" (Did you catch any fish, Papa?)

At the end of a drift, the fishermen delivered their catch to a cannery receiving scow. Each cannery had a separate scow manned by a "fish receiver," who was paid a commission by the cannery. Fishermen could choose among the canneries.

A receiving scow looked like a big "L" lying on its back. It had a long, one-story fish receiving area containing a large scale, wooden fish boxes, ice, a bookkeeping desk, and an enclosed privy. At one end, there was a partial second floor that housed a living area for times when the fish receiver did not bring out his float house. This one-room area was very basic, containing just a bed, chair, table, and stove.

Our village had three scows for different canneries, all located in Astoria. Ray Raihala recalls that



ROD RAIHALA

JOHN SUOKKO AND AMANDA ANDERSON SUOKKO, LILA RAIHALA'S PARENTS, "MAKING NET" IN THE 1940S.

each cannery had a launch that came daily to collect the fish. The Barbey Packing Corporation's launch was the *Mayday,* skippered by Carl Holdiman. The Columbia River Packers Association (CRPA) launch was the *CRPA,* captained by Eddo Elliot. And the Union Fishermen's Cooperative Packing Company (Union Fish) launch was the *Globe.* In addition, there was a Standard Oil launch called the *Service,* skippered by Pete Tadei, which delivered boat gas to be stored in 55-gallon drums in the scows.

There was some price competition, but generally, the canneries' prices per pound were almost identical. If a scow was not manned, fishermen would sometimes deliver, weigh, and record their own catch, for which they received a small extra commission.

When the fishermen arrived at the scow, they pitched their fish inside the receiving area with a pike pole. Then the fish were separated by species, weighed, and iced. Depending upon the season, a delivery might include Chinook salmon, Steelhead, blueback (Sockeye), silvers (Coho), shad, sturgeon, or smelt. Some canneries allowed fishermen to take cash for their catch. Typically, however, the fish receiver would usually record the number of fish, species with their weights, and the fisherman would get a check later.

We placed the fish on ice in sturdy wooden boxes with rope handles and covered them with more ice after weighing. After each delivery, we washed down the scow's deck with buckets of river water and a large push-broom. Then we sprinkled on rock salt to make the area less slippery.

About once a day, a launch from each cannery would stop by and pick up the fish that had been delivered. Each launch had a cargo crane that would hoist a stack of two or three boxes on board at a time. The launch also delivered boxes of ice for future use.

Gillnet Language and Culture

The gillnetters' system was based on trust. Fishermen trusted each other not to cheat on their rotations. Canneries trusted fishermen who made self-deliveries to record their catch correctly. Both the cannery owners and the fishermen trusted the fish receiver to keep accurate records of fish deliveries, and so on.

The fishermen also had a language all their own. Specialized terms abounded: a "petticoat" was a rubber apron used when picking up a net, "gumboots" were hip-high rubber boots, making or mending nets was called "knitting," and "towhead" was the point where the fishermen waited before starting their drifts.

Homesteading meant running a boat aground, usually on a sand bar. This rarely damaged the boat, but it was extremely embarrassing for the fisherman involved, resulting in merciless ribbing from the other gillnetters. Orville Darling homesteaded so often that others referred to running aground as "pulling an Orville." Roy Takalo once beached his boat while carrying a passenger named Rosemary. Long thereafter, that sand bar was called "Rosemary Flats."

Each part of a gillnet also had its own name: "lead line," "cork line," "trammels," "hemlines," and "apron" strings were terms guaranteed to confuse landlubbers.

If two gillnetters passed after a drift, they exchanged hand signals to indicate how many fish they had caught. There was also a signal meaning got skunked if a drift had produced no fish.

Pulling Snags

Snags were logs or even whole trees that had sunk to the bottom of the river. They tore big holes in the gillnets. Fishermen who got "snagged" would compare notes about where the snag was located. They then used heavy mesh "snag nets" to precisely find the snag without causing further damage to their gillnets.

To get rid of snags, they hired a "snag scow" and a diver. This small scow was supported by the gillnetters' union, the Columbia River Fishermen's Protective Union. In the late 1950s, the diver used a bulky suit with weighted boots and a bell helmet to go underwater to locate snags. Our diver was Ross Lindstrom. He was connected to the snag scow by an air hose to a compressor on the scow. He

signaled to those on the scow by jerking on a rope.

Once a snag was located, ropes or cables were tied around it, and a hoist on the scow pulled it up to be transported to a location where it would not damage fishnets. Later, snag-pulling was done with scuba divers.

Horse Seining

For a time, seining with large nets pulled by horses was allowed on the Columbia. I remember seeing this once, and it was very impressive. The Kaboth seining station consisted of a complex of island-based buildings with a horse barn, bunkhouse, receiving station, and other structures, all painted white.

Teams of horses pulling a large seining net were led into relatively shallow water near the island. Forming an oversized U, they would then pull the ends of the nets toward shore, tightening it into a "purse," trapping large quantities of fish. This method was so efficient that in 1948, Oregon voters outlawed the practice to preserve the salmon runs. The Kaboth bunkhouse was later towed to Brownsmead and became a Sunday school building for the Immanuel Lutheran Church.

The Columbus Day Storm

Gradually our stays out on the river grew shorter. Fishing seasons were curtailed, and as we got into high school, we became involved in more land-based activities.

The death knell for our scow village came from the Columbus Day storm on October 12, 1962. This was an enormous hurricane-strength storm that was very unusual for Oregon. Our float house and two fish scows were moored on the river, and that storm damaged them all.

The CRPA scow, which had a sturdy, barge-like base, broke loose and was found somewhere near the Washington shore. Our float house had a log driven up through the decking, and the porch roof was knocked down. Our receiving scow, which we used to handle fish for the Barbey Cannery, was smashed into kindling—not a single wall was left standing. Pipe handrails on the outside walls were twisted into corkscrews. The building was utterly destroyed, but my father found his reading glasses where the bookkeeping desk had been, and they had survived without a scratch.

Our float house was eventually repaired, but after that storm, we spent no more summers out on the river.

A Finn From Astoria

by John E. Seeborg

Dad's Business Ventures
The Franklin Press

In the Twenties, after returning the family to Astoria, Victor opened a printing business with a man who was related to my mother, Fanny, by marriage. The shop was located downtown in the Spexarth building where, on Saturday mornings, my cousin Orvo and I occasionally earned a few cents burning scrap paper. Hannah became the sales clerk and bookkeeper. This relieved her of having to look after us younger siblings at home. The business, named "The Franklin Press," was highly successful, making it possible for Dad to buy a new car, a Peerless. It was a classy car, suitable for an upper middle class family. Another nice car we had in those days was a Velie. I'm uncertain as to which of the cars was first. I think it was the Peerless, which we took to Vancouver, B.C. when we twins were about six or seven. That car had jump seats which folded down from the back of the front seat, making it capable of carrying eight people. Arvid and I were the regular occupants of the jump seats. We stayed in tourist cabins in Vancouver, B.C., at a place called Maple Leaf Cabins. Mother fixed our meals but I can't remember how long we stayed there. On our return trip, we stopped in Seattle to visit Aunt Ida. We spent a day picnicking at Woodland Park where I seem to recall seeing some caged wild animals. That could well have been my first visit to a zoo.

Alameda Grocery

Dad's partner in the Franklin Press got the itch to start a daily morning newspaper. There had been one in Astoria, the *Daily Astorian,* but it had merged with the afternoon *Budget,* and morning deliveries were discontinued. Dad had no stomach for running a newspaper, so he sold out his interest to his partner. Dad then purchased a neighborhood grocery store on Alameda Avenue at the foot of Melbourne Street, a few blocks below our home. Here again he developed a successful business called the "Alameda Grocery." Again, Hannah was the chief clerk and bookkeeper. Years earlier, before the move to the country, Dad had been a partner, manager, and bookkeeper of a much larger retail store in Uniontown called

Image courtesy of the Lawrence Seeborg

The Franklin Press
Astoria, Oregon – June 1925
After the Astoria fire of 1922 burned Vic's original printing and stationery shop, he reestablished his business using the proceeds of his fire insurance payment. His daughter Hannah is behind the counter.

"Finnish Mercantile." I'm confident it was he who later taught Hannah how to keep books. In the store was a typewriter on which I spent hours "huntin' and peckin'," usually typing the lyrics to songs such as "Bye Bye Blackbird" and "Springtime In The Rockies."

Home deliveries were the key to success in the grocery business in the twenties. Hannah spent mornings taking telephone orders which she and Dad filled. We had a delivery truck, the rear interior being high enough for Bill to walk into as he loaded the groceries. It seems that much, if not most, of Dad's customers were in the Astor Court district, the rest being nearer to the store. When we twins were old enough, it was Arvid who replaced Eddie and accompanied Bill on deliveries after school and on Saturdays. Once Bill and Arvi were coming down Melbourne Street, a very steep one block-long hill with the store located virtually at its base, when the brakes failed. When they tried to turn onto Alameda in front of the store, the truck overturned at the store entrance. Neither Arvid nor Bill was injured.

We had a neighbor, Henry Palo, who was a barber and lived at the top of West Franklin. He and Dad struck a deal which benefited both remarkably well. They set up a make-shift barber chair in the back hall at home and, a couple of times a month, Henry would stop there on his way home and give us boys haircuts. Dad was relieved of this chore and paid Henry in groceries.

Houseguest

When I was eleven or so, there was a smallpox epidemic of which I was a victim. With so many of us living in such close quarters, it was considered essential that I be moved. Coincidentally, the Simonsons, who lived on West Franklin, were in the same predicament. Their daughter, Ellen, a year or two older than I, had also caught smallpox, so Mr. Simonson and five of the seven Simonson siblings moved in with relatives. I joined Mrs. Simonson, her baby, and Ellen for a two weeks quarantine. I was given the oldest boy's bedroom and learned how to operate his crystal set (radio). Reading material was scarce and consisted of books on temperance as well as Horatio Alger books on the benefits of hard work and clean living. There was an old-fashioned pump organ in the front room and I was allowed to pick out tunes—one finger artistry. Henry Palo, the barber, frequently stopped by afternoons on his way home. I had located some baseball gloves and a baseball in the house, so Henry and I played catch. I stood in front of my house and he was across the street. That was about the extent of my exercise during my stay. It was a very pleasant, quiet period which I enjoyed thoroughly

and it always brings back memories of the Simonsons, a family like ours, deeply rooted in the Christian faith.

A Visit to Uncle Ed's

Uncle Ed was a resourceful person. He had farmed in Brush Prairie, done several summers of gillnetting out of Astoria and, at the time I went to visit him and Aunt Effie in Portland, he owned and operated a neighborhood grocery store. He also preached in Finnish churches, but more as an avocation than an occupation. His store was on a street corner just about where Portland's Memorial Coliseum is now. He and Aunt Effie lived in a comfortable apartment above the store.

I believe I was merely taking a week off from delivering newspapers when I went there a few weeks after school summer vacation began. I was about twelve. Mornings after breakfast, I walked a couple blocks to N.E. Broadway to watch the cars at a busy intersection just before Broadway crossed the Willamette River. It fascinated me being able to cross Broadway via a tunnel. Electric signals controlling traffic seemed so "big city" I would stay there an hour during the morning rush. One morning after a breakfast of a dozen slices of French toast (Aunt Effie thought it was incredible and told the story of my voracious appetite frequently), I rushed to my favorite spot on Broadway. However, the rush was almost over, so I decided to make a bold experiment and walked across the Broadway Bridge. Nothing to it. Within a day or two, I told Aunt Effie I was going to go downtown and she had no objection, so I took off. I roamed around the business section, then decided to cross another bridge back to the east side. There I wandered around, enjoying the sights, such as they were, and came upon a theater. I recall it as being the Oriental. I bought a ticket and saw a movie. I ate a hot dog (in the theater) and drank a root beer, about the fifth one thus far that day. After the movie, I strolled back to Uncle Ed's and there in front of the store stood my dad. I was so surprised to see him. A short while later he asked me if I was ready to go home, so I packed and we left for Astoria. It must have been years later that it occurred to me that Aunt Effie probably became terribly concerned the day of my extended walk and had called Dad who came after me. After all, I was twelve and had left about 9:00 and it was about 1:00 when I entered the movie and close to 5:00 when I saw Dad. No one ever mentioned that there had been concern over my absence.

"There Will Be Some Changes Made"

As Arvi and I grew older, our responsibilities changed. Arvid was expected to do more in helping

with deliveries at the store and I did more inside the store, such as taking orders and preparing them for delivery. Over a span of a few short years, several more significant changes developed within the family. Hannah went to work for the Norblad Law firm; Bill was married and working for a lumberyard, later for Hughes Mortuary after his first wife, Alice, died. Hugo got a job as a fish receiver on a scow at Neah Bay, west of Port Angeles. After he and Elva got married, he got a job selling electric appliances for Pacific Power and Light Co. Mother bought some appliances, which truly cut her workload considerably. Later, as the depression caused more "no sales," he became superintendent of a city park on top of a hill. Hilma went to work as a salesgirl in a downtown dress shop before marrying John Jeffers, her high school sweetheart, who gave her the nickname "Mike." His family owned the Sunflower Dairy. Helen, before marrying her high school beau, Elmer Blomquist, was a hair dresser while Elmer attended Linfield College for a couple of years. The trend continued when

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Sunflower Dairy owned by the Jeffers family. John Jeffers is third from the right

Eddie and his high school sweetheart, Laura, were married in 1934, two years after she finished high school and after Eddie gained some experience in cereal chemistry at the Pillsbury Flour Mill in Astoria.

Before Eddie succeeded in letting Laura catch him, he was a high school celebrity. It wasn't in sports, but in public speaking. I'm not thoroughly familiar with the particulars of his speaking career except to know he was on the high school debating team. He was also student body president of the high school.

Loosely connected to this talent was an incident that I do remember quite well. Eddie, with probably other young Finns, decided to organize a Finnish youth group, which they chose to name "The Sons of Kalevala." The organizational meeting took place at a hall in the Uppertown district of Astoria. As the time to convene the meeting arrived, there was so much conversation going on, Eddie, the chairman, was having a difficult time quieting the large crowd. There was no microphone or P.A. system, so he used the gavel until some semblance of order developed. Then Eddie's voice carried over the remaining crowd noise with the profound words, "Now 'tis time for all frivolity to cease." The meeting proceeded quietly and successfully.

The Great Depression

The Great Depression had spread around the world. In America there were millions of workers unemployed, with few or no jobs available. Bread lines and soup kitchens became familiar in the cities. Adolf Hitler was well on his way to becoming dictator of Germany. He advocated "getting even" with the Allies, the nations which defeated Germany in the first World War. Hitler also preached a doctrine of ridding the world of Jews and political enemies, thus promising to create what he described would be an Aryan population. Herbert Hoover was President, but was defeated in November 1931, by Franklin Delano Roosevelt who was inaugurated the following March.

It took a year or so for the effects of the Depression to reach Astoria but even then, the results were less severe than in the larger cities. Personally, I was hit hard but didn't fully realize the significance of my loss. Dad had allowed me to keep a small portion of my earnings for spending money while the remainder was deposited in a savings account at a local Savings and Loan. It went broke. Some time later, Dad received and gave me a check from the bank for ten percent of what had been in my account. I can't recall the amount I lost nor the amount I was reimbursed. I know it was more than fifty years later before I made

another deposit into a Savings and Loan.

Consequences of the Depression

Alameda Grocery Closed

On a much different scale, Dad's grocery business literally disappeared. Out of gratitude to the customers who had provided him with such a good living, he refused to cut off their credit. The result was Dad kept groceries on the shelves as long as there was cash to buy them, but sold the merchandise on credit to any and all of his regular customers. As these customers learned they could buy groceries cheaper elsewhere for cash, they soon discontinued any cash purchases from Dad. Yet, when they had no cash, they continued buying from Dad on credit. As long as the store had money with which to buy groceries to sell, Dad kept it open. He left me in charge of running the store as the inventory became depleted. When only a small amount of groceries was left, he moved from Alameda Street down to Taylor Street (later renamed West Marine Drive) where he rented a very small place a block east of the Uniontown fire station. In a few weeks the doors were closed permanently. I believe I was about fifteen.

Years later, shortly before the statute of limitations went into effect on grocery bills still owed, Dad turned over all of his accounts to me to try to collect some of what was owed. For a few months, I contacted his former customers and attempted to make arrangements for payment of their bills, but to no avail. Not one person paid anything; they all seemed to be fully aware that they had only to stall a few more months and the indebtedness would be erased legally. During those years after Dad finally closed the store, I know of only one customer who squared his account with Dad: Mr. Koski, father of Henry and Arnie. He picked up logs and trees floating in Youngs Bay and cut them up into firewood. He delivered cord upon cord to our house until he and Dad agreed his account was fully paid.

Ex-Partner Welches

Dad received another low blow when his former partner asked for a loan from a dairy farmer known to both him and Dad. He, the former partner, needed money in order to continue the morning newspaper, *The Daily Messenger.* The farmer asked Dad if he would cosign a note for his ex-partner and Dad felt compelled to do so. When the newspaper failed, Dad was stuck with a several thousand-dollar indebtedness. He then had to ask his sister's husband, Alex Carmichael, for money to pay off that note. It took much sacrifice to garner funds to repay Uncle Alex but he managed to do so. The former partner who

was responsible for that tremendous hardship never repaid any portion to Dad.

Insurance Sales Not in Dad's Repertoire

At the time I was "running" the store, Dad tried selling life insurance. He signed a contract with New York Life and for a few months attempted to close some sales, but times were getting increasingly difficult and prospects were not inclined to make long-term financial commitments. I don't know how long he was active in the insurance business, but it certainly had to be a discouraging experience. He had a desk in his bedroom and I remember looking through the rate book at times. Figures fascinated me and this gave me my first inkling of the basics of insurance.

Finally—Steady Work

Another brief experience Dad had was working in the Work Projects Administration (W.P.A.), first as a laborer with pick and shovel, then as a timekeeper. All this time, he continued searching for steady work rather than rely on a government relief program. When he learned that the janitor of an elementary school was retiring, he asked for the job. The school superintendent, Mr. A. C. Hampton, felt Dad was over qualified for janitorial work, but Dad's imploring resulted in his being hired. The school was the Lewis and Clark Elementary School located a few blocks above downtown Astoria. It was a three-story building with a furnace room in the basement. On the ground floor was a storage room where Dad established a rustic hideaway where he could eat, make coffee and often spend the night. Dad started at a salary of $200 a month out of which he could pay for any help he might need. He needed a lot of help so some of us kids pitched in by sweeping floors after school. Dad was given the title of "custodian" because he had keys to virtually every area in the building, but he frequently reminded us kids that he was the school janitor. He didn't feel that "custodian" was appropriate when he spent most of the time doing janitorial work. Of course, he felt that we should respect the job title "janitor."

We had no car. Consequently, Dad walked almost two miles to work early each morning, then back home at the end of the workday. It was during periods of inclement weather that he stayed overnight at the school. Sometimes he stayed overnight just to keep fire in the furnaces so that the school would be warm when the teachers and pupils arrived. There were times, even in Astoria, when it became bitter cold. Dad usually kept a small larder on hand and an electric plate. Mother would often send him hot food that

one of us kids would take to him on our way to high school.

Dad finally found it highly advisable to get a car, so he bought a 1936 Ford V-8. This made things so much easier. An important advantage gained was that Mother could now ride with Dad to school occasionally and spend the day working with him. Mother was a hard worker all of her life. At times, even Hannah got a ride to work, although when she did, she would arrive at the law office much earlier than usual. Arvid, Arnold and I often rode with Dad—not always together—as far as "his" school then walked the few remaining blocks to our high school.

Salmon Backbones

During these times, we siblings didn't fully realize the severity of the Great Depression. Everyone we knew was in a similar financial position, but not all had such large families. One touch of relief was getting free salmon. During fishing season, one of us boys would be delegated to go down to the Union Fisherman's cannery (Union Fisherman's Cooperative Packing Company) first thing in the morning and get in line at the butchers' table where salmon were being prepared for canning. Salmon backbones were removed and cut into five or six-inch lengths and given away. It was surprising the amount of meat left on those backbones. Aldie Niemi, a neighbor of ours, usually did the butchering and distributing of those backbone pieces. He always gave us boys a generous amount to take home, responding to objections with succinct comments as to the size of our family. Actually, there probably was no part of the salmon any tastier than the meat from those backbones.

Thanksgiving Dinner

There was always a crowd of family members at home on Thanksgiving. If memory serves, it seems that fourteen was the fewest that showed up, but more often than not there would be even more. For several years, we had one special guest: Heino Riippa. Heino was a victim of polio at an early age and was paralyzed from the waist down. He lived just a block away, one of three brothers raised by their father. Eddie would generally go get Heino (they were the same age) and he would be seated next to Mother and Dad at the main table, the smaller children would be seated nearby at a smaller table.

The table was filled with platters and bowls of food appropriate to the occasion, with the huge turkey the main attraction. For several years, we had home made root beer as the principal beverage. That was my contribution. I made a batch each summer with Hire's extract and we never opened a bottle until Thanksgiving Day. Although we

had no ice, the root beer, having been stashed in the basement for months "aging," was always quite cool and delicious—if I do say so myself.

Regular daily dinners (we called them suppers) were themselves enjoyable. Rules were established which were obeyed faithfully (or so it seemed). The younger children were kept silent except when politely asking for food to be passed. Usually our parents sat at the corner of the table, Mother frequently with a baby in her arms. The senior siblings sat between the juveniles and seemed to have a monopoly on the conversations. I don't recall any time when there was fewer than eight children at the table and ten seemed to have been the maximum.

Everyone was seated at the same time; it was considered sinful to be late. Food was placed on the table and passed around and, even when it became necessary to economize during the Depression years, we usually had roast beef or salmon as the entree. At times the "menu" was less appealing, such as when Mother served fish head stew, or sturgeon. Ugh! We children were not permitted to have dessert until we had eaten dinner, sometimes resulting in an eating race if the dessert was particularly tempting. Before they moved out, Bill and Hugo were often at odds, usually over who was to get the car that evening. Bill was a better soft-soaper to Mother, which irked Hugo who didn't get the car as often. Dad sometimes intervened for Hugo.

"Logging" Operation

I feel that age sixteen lasted a lifetime, so many good things happened. After school was out for the summer, Dad developed a miniature logging operation with Arvi and me as his principal "loggers." On a flat place on top of the hill way above our home, he located a grove of alder trees not very difficult to cut down. Also, a truck could be driven fairly close. He set a quota of trees for us to cut down, saw into proper lengths for the furnace and wood stove, and stack to dry. Dad had his regular job at the school to tend to, so we were on our own. Knowing what was expected of us, we went to work with axes and a six-foot, two-man crosscut saw. By early afternoon each day, we reached or exceeded our assignment. Arvi then looked for a ball game, usually finding one on the sandlot in Uniontown. I went swimming.

Not A Lucrative Job

Later that summer, I went to Quincy to work for Aunt Fiina and Jack. In addition to the routine chores, primarily with the cows and barn, we worked hours shocking wheat. Then I met Eleanor who lived about a mile or so away. In the evening after all the chores were done,

I'd walk the dike road to her house just to sit on the porch with her. (All of that area was protected by dikes to prevent the Columbia River from flooding the low farmland.) Long after I should have been in bed, I'd return to Rietala's for a few hours sleep before starting another long day of farm work. A couple of times, Aunt Fiina and Jack's daughter, Roma, urged me to ride with her to Clatskanie where we'd see a movie and have milkshakes.

One evening, after about two or three weeks there, Dad called me and said the salmon run was starting at Astoria and I could probably get a job in the cannery. I asked Aunt Fiina to let me have my pay so I could catch the morning train. She did some quick calculating with the result that after she deducted my room and board plus the movies and milkshakes with cousin Roma, I owed Aunt Fiina several dollars. I called Dad and told him this and he had me tell her he'd send her a check for what I owed plus train fare home.

Cannery Work

I quickly got a job at the Union Fisherman's cannery and, for about two weeks, I worked eight to ten hour days "sliming" salmon. Wally Johansen, a classmate and close friend, lived next door and he had the same job as I. We were paid seventy-five cents an hour. At noon, we ran up the hill to have lunch at our homes, then ran back to the cannery for more "sliming." Sunday came and we had to work, so again we ran home for lunch. But this time, I saw we had company, so I slipped in through the front door and ran up the stairs to get to the bathroom. At the top of the stairs a well-dressed man, a complete stranger to me, grabbed me and hugged me fervently, asking me in Finnish if I had been "saved." I realized he must be a clergyman from Finland or Minnesota, so I said I had and tried to get free of his grasp only to get kissed before he released me. Ugh! I smelled strongly of fish and I hoped some of it rubbed off on him. Mother and Dad frequently brought guests home from church for dinner, but such fervor had never before—or since—been so unpleasantly demonstrated to me.

Swimming at the Net Racks

Extending into the river about a hundred yards from the shore were many docks for mooring gillnet fishing boats. On the surface of these docks were racks built to spread nets for drying and mending. Of course, they quite naturally became known as net racks. During a normal low tide, there was barely enough water near the shore to float a fishing boat. At high tide, the water at the same point was eight feet deep. Extreme low tides, called minus tides, left the boats nearer shore high and dry but, as a

CCHS IMAGE #06.019.088

Gillnet boats tied up at the docks with net racks by Union Fishermans Co-op. Photo by Allen Saiget.

rule, the owners moved their boats to deeper water when a minus tide approached. The river there would sometimes be ten feet deep at high tide.

Most of us Uniontown kids learned how to swim around the net racks. One of our favorite sports was to drop a can lid into the water, wait a few seconds, then dive after the lid which would be fluttering towards the bottom somewhat like a leaf falling from a tree. The reflection of light on the shiny lids was what we looked for when retrieving them. Another practice for those of us older and more skilled swimmers was to dive from the top of the net racks into the deeper water at the end of the net racks. Since each boat using a mooring needed a ladder for fishermen to climb up, we had access to those ladders when swimming. Occasionally, several of us teenagers would be swimming without the benefit of trunks. Sometimes, sans trunks, we would form a line and, holding hands, we would run at full speed fifty or so feet to the edge of the dock and jump as far out as we could, feet first, holding hands as long as possible before dropping into the river. Our favorite spot for doing this stunt was near the Union Fisherman's cannery where women worked on the top floor. Sometimes they watched. It's surprising how immodest we were.

The final installment of John Seeborg's boyhood recollections will appear in the Fall 2021 Cumtux.

Werner and Helena Fellman

A handwritten recollection by their son, Paavo Fellman,
Transcribed by Jane Harmer.

What I can remember about my folks.

Mother's Family

Mother was born on a farm in the province of Oulu (Finnish: Oulun lääni, Swedish: Uleåborgs län), upriver from Oulu Finland, February 19, 1880. Her father was a farmer named George Kaupe. Her mother's name was Margaret Kastel. Of that union, there were, I think, nine children. Their names were George, John, Henry, Liisa, Kathryn, Helena, Kristena, Hilma, and Anna. Her (their) parents died early. All the children, except Liisa and Mother, immigrated to the U.S.A. about 1880 or before. According to Mother, her father gambled and drank away the farm, including his wife's inheritance. The combination of the two farms was why mother's birth name was Helena Sophia Kauppi-Kontinen. The boys took their mother's maiden name of Kastel. The two oldest boys drowned while commercial fishing on the Columbia River in sail-powered fishing boats. Henry was a lineman who fell from a power pole and died from his injuries.

Kathryn married John Poysky in Finland and had their son, George. Soon after immigrating to Astoria, Oregon, Kathryn died. John Poysky returned to Finland and married Sophia Pietilla. That marriage resulted in the birth of Tyne, Eva, Charles, Martha, Frank, Wayne, and June. When Hilma and Kirsten came to the U.S., they brought along Anna, who was just a young child. Mother lived with another sister, Liisa, her husband, and an infant in Rovaniemi. A plague struck the area, and they all died, except Mother. In 1896, with the help of an aunt and sisters in America, Mother immigrated to the U.S. at the age of sixteen. She traveled alone to Ellis Island, then across the U.S. to Astoria. Failing to get off the river-boat at Astoria, she went all the way to Ilwaco, Washington. When she finally arrived in Astoria, her only surviving family members were her sisters Hilma, Kristina, and Anna. (The Kastel family also included another brother-in-law, John Niemi. John Poysky and John Niemi were both fishermen. John Niemi's sister married a Lukharila who took over the Kastel homestead in Elsie, Oregon.)

Image courtesy of Jane Harmer

Interior of Fellman's Astoria Fur

Furniture, Company, ca. 1914

Dad's Family

[Editor's Notes. The Fellman family of Swedish Finns was considered minor aristocracy. Werner Fellman, born in Oulu, Finland, was a graduate of Brahestad College before coming to this country in 1902. He was said to have left Finland to avoid being conscripted into the Russian Army by the Czar to fight the Japanese.]

One of Dad's acquaintances of his school days and a Finnish nationalist, Eugene Schauman, shot and killed the Russian Governor-General Nikolay Bobrikov in 1904. All of this brought on nationalistic feelings for an independent Finland, culminating in the declaration of independence during the Soviet Revolution in 1917.

After a short stay working in Hull, England, Dad immigrated to the U.S. on the passenger liner *Cameronia* or *Campania* about 1902. He came with a friend, John Slotte, who became a successful contractor in Astoria. Dad went to work for the Hammond Lumber Company for forty dollars a month and a free meal at the China cookhouse. He rose to top tallyman when the head tallyman died, and a contest was held when each tallyman loaded a hold in a lumber schooner. When the lumber was re-tallied in San Francisco, whoever had tallied the most accurately became the Hammond Lumber Co. head tallyman in Astoria. Dad won. He was proud of that feat.

Mom and Dad were members of the Finnish Lutheran Church at the foot of 18th Street in Astoria. They were married in September 1903.

The folks moved to Reedly, California, when Kasten was very young. They had bought an orange ranch on the Kings River. It was too hot there, so they sold the ranch to some other Finns. The Reedly area had a significant number of families of Finnish descent. The Panttaja family was one. Lauri Panttaja married June Poysky.

So, the folks moved back to Astoria and decided to start a store. In the meantime, Dad went to work for a furniture dealer by the name of Shanahan. Dad said, at the time, he did not know the difference between a chiffonier and a lamp chimney. Astoria was a bustling place and had high expectations of amounting to a city of some stature. There was all the timber around to be logged, milled, and shipped. The Columbia River provided a seemingly endless supply of fish to be caught, canned, and sold. The future looked bright, indeed.

Mr. Shanahan, Dad's boss, took a liking to Dad, and he wanted to retire. He sold the store to Dad. One of the first things he did on selling was to take Dad to the Scandinavian American Bank and introduce him to the manager and had Dad borrow a $1,000. Over Dad's objections, it

CHS Image #1_089031

Helena and her sisters.
left to right, back row: Hilma Niemi Simulka and Kristina Pernu.
front row: Helena Fellman and Anna Wirkkala

Courtesy of Kristina Berney

Helena and Werner Fellman

was done. "This established your credit," Mr. Shanahan explained later. The thought of owing that sum so worried Dad that he paid it all back in two months, not having used it at all.

The store was narrow and deep with no freight entrance in the rear, so all shipments were made through the front. One nice summer day, a team and lorry dropped off chairs and rocker(s), and they were lined up in wrappings and all on the wooden sidewalk. Dr. Toivo Forsstrom and Dr. Werner Lagus, both cronies of Dad, were sitting in the chairs along with a traveling salesman from Portland, enjoying the sunshine and talking to passersby. Chas. Rohut, the contractor, came by. They spoke French to him. Mr. Bremner, the owner of the blacksmith shop at the foot of 12th, came by. They spoke German to him. So it went, always speaking a foreign tongue—Swedish, Finnish to the amazement of the traveling salesman seated with them. Finally, "Tall John," Pethia Kinamonni, a tall Chinese man showed up with his two baskets of vegetables balanced on his shoulders by a bamboo pole. The traveling man said to the group, "I bet you can't talk to this man." As he approached, they hailed him, and he responded, speaking to each in a language completely foreign. "You guys beat all," the salesman exclaimed, shaking his head. Little did he realize that "Tall John" was speaking Finnish.

Dr. Forsstrom was a highly successful physician and surgeon. He made a fortune practicing his profession among the Finnish population. His wife, Allie, spent it. She spent money like it was water. She owned a Stutz Bearcat, had horses, had their house rebuilt, had the rooms plastered specific colors, then had the walls papered. She put on recitals in her home, starring herself before her guests. Once she decided she wanted to be Queen of the Astoria Regatta. Votes were derived from purchases of merchandise from local merchants. Dr. Forsstrom spent thousands getting Alli elected. We had a picture Alli gave us of herself, all decked out in a Queen-like robe, crown, and all. Despite these eccentricities, she was good-hearted and most generous to us kids, not having any children of her own.

Dr. Lagus, also a Finnish-born doctor, was anything but ambitious. Although very well-schooled, he never made much of his profession. His wife, Sigurd, kept the family going by being a masseuse to those in the community. She trudged up and down the Astoria hills to her appointments. They had three children, Sigurd, Lorenzo, and Ami Lagus. Sigurd became a mining engineer who died in Korea in the 1920s or 1930s. Lorenzo became a farmer (bulbs) on Clatsop Plains. Ami married a real estate agent by the name of Johnson and

Image courtesy of Kristina Bernet

Kasten Fellman

lives on the family property on Clatsop Plains. Mrs. Lagus was an exceptionally good cook and a good friend of Mother's.

When the folks had the summer place in Seaside, near the train stop north of 12th Street called Surf, many a time, a big party would arrive carrying cloth baskets of food. Mom would not know they were coming until they arrived! There was a sign over the door that said in Finnish, "Lazyman's Rest." It was anything but lazy for Mother.

Mother had a heart condition that doctors prescribed digitalis to help. She took it for years. Much later, it was found it was her teeth that were the source of trouble. Once she had the teeth removed, her heart problem disappeared.

CCHA IMAGE #01.148.006

QUEEN ALLIE, ASTORIA REGATTA, 1914

While in Astoria, she would have to rest two or three times each block when we climbed up the hill to home. She was in her forties at that time.

In 1911, Dr. Forrstrom moved to Portland. The folks rented their home on Grand Ave. That is where I was born. Dr. Lagus attended to the birth. 1911 was the centennial year of Astoria, and a big celebration took place that summer—parades, regattas, athletic events, exhibits, pageantry. Indians from all over the northwest attended. Mom missed most of it as I was born in July. Mom said she never forgave me for it. Ha!

In 1912, the folks bought a piece of property from Mrs. Morgan, 670 Jerome Ave, a half block from the high school. The Morgans much earlier had owned a farm there and had planted fruit trees, cedars extending all the way up to Coxcomb Hill. The Morgan house faced the river, as did Capt. Hammerstrom's house. The folks built their house between those two facing Jerome Ave. They lived there from 1912 to 1929. Dad said the home cost $2,500.00 to build, excluding the wood-burning hot air furnace. The house set way back in the lot with a garage attached on the west side. The driveway was two concrete troughs with a curve in it which did not do tires any good. The two-story house had three bedrooms, one bath, full basement, fireplace, wood lift, small kitchen, den, big open front porch (later enclosed), and a good-sized back porch or veranda. The view from the house was fantastic, from the Columbia River bar to Tongue Point and Washington State across the river.

Capt. Hammerstrom's family lived next door, to the west. He was the skipper of the Light House Tender *Heather*. He had jumped ship as a young man from Sweden and been employed in the lighthouse service most of his life. Mrs. Hammerstrom was the mother of four, Alf, Ruby, Race, and Lloyd. They were all much older than Kasten. Mrs. Hammerstrom never

Image courtesy of Jane Hafner

The Fellman's home on Jerome Avenue.

forgot anyone's birthday and was always baking cookies or cakes in her wood-burning range. All the Hammerstrom children went to college. Lloyd went to the Naval Academy. None of them settled in Astoria but occasionally visited. After Capt. Hammerstrom retired, he and Mrs. Hammerstrom moved to La Jolla, Calif., selling their house to Capt. Erickson, who succeeded (him on the *Heather*). West of Hammerstrom was the August Hildebrand home, an immigrant family from Germany. They had two boys, Frank and Arthur. During World War I, Art was named "Ki" for Kaiser. To this day, I still remember him as "Ki" Hildebrand. August Hildebrand had a furniture store and a fleet of Model T Ford trucks. He was a partner in the rock crusher venture with Mr. Gerding on Coxcomb Hill.

Dad used to come to the house on Jerome for coffee every afternoon. This was a ritual, and neighbors who had been to town took advantage of it to get a ride up the hill. The folk's first car was an E.M.F., standing for Everett Morgan & Flanders. It was also known as "every morning fix it," the forerunner of the Studebaker. The car had wooden wheels, fab-

ric tires, acetylene lights, outside brakes, leather, and brass. One time going out to Elsie, we had four flats. Sundays, there were always friends with folks on their Sunday trips. About this time is when the folks acquired the house in Seaside. The road to Seaside was in some places two planks, and if you drove off, Oh boy!

The store prospered, as did Astoria during this period. World War I had commenced. Wooden ships were being built at Smith Point and McEachern shipyards on Youngs Bay, and Ft. Stevens was being rebuilt. The town population grew to 15,000, and the image of Astoria becoming a metropolis seemed assured as it was the third-largest community in the state. Portland, the town, one hundred miles south-east, saw to it that all business of the state revolved around Portland, so Astoria never amounted to much.

The folks were very anti-Portland and loyal to Astoria merchants for anything they needed.

Most of the Finnish families lived in the Uniontown and Smith Point area. It was a great advantage being able to speak Finnish to be hired as a clerk in a store in Astoria. In between downtown and Uniontown, there was a Chinese community. The children played together, and the Chinese youngsters learned to speak Finnish.

Visitors

Mother liked to hold parties. She loved to cook, and she was good at it. Every Christmas, she had made plum and rum tarts and gave them away to friends and neighbors. She put on dress-up parties for all the schoolteachers, and our front yard would be filled with costumed gals from the different city schools. The teachers said they enjoyed the parties, especially the new teachers who met future friends and acquaintances they otherwise would not have met. Our house often had visitors from Finland—maybe a priest, the next time a professional wrestler, or pianist or singer. Traveling men stayed too. Many times, orders for the next year stoves or mattresses would be figured out at the house. This always was a chore for Mother, and most times, where it was for a goodly number of people, she hired her friend, Mrs. Porko, to help. Mrs. Porko was a large, strong Finnish woman from Uppertown and was a big help to Mother, especially when Mother was ill.

Mother did not complain often. One time she blew her stack to me after spending hours making special dishes and putting on a first-class dinner fit for a king. Mrs. Rindell, the druggist's wife, on leaving, thanked Mother for dinner and said she especially enjoyed the sardines. Mom never swore, but I think she came close that time. Strangely, if

Image courtesy of Jane Harmer

Helena Fellman

I would swear in English, she never punished me, but when I swore in Finnish, she washed my mouth out with soap—Fels Naptha, no less.

Mother liked flowers and spent a lot of time on the yard. (She planted) a row of roses on both sides of the walk. The white lattice fence was covered with Dorothy Perkins roses. It seemed to me that cutting grass and trimming rose bushes was a never-ending chore. Hustwiches furnished much of the plants and was even hired to trim the maple tree every year. Dad complained about the cost, but Mother usually received whatever she wanted as she did with the food costs. She had a standing charge account at Johnson and Morrison, the local grocer. She ordered over the phone, and they delivered. And if it was not what she wanted, she sent it back. Paulson's Fish Market was another that Mother bought from, as was the Finnish Meat Market. Everything in the food line had to be the best.

Astoria Furniture Co.

Sometime later, Dad bought out M. M. Nelson, another furniture store, and in 1914 moved to the Elks building at 11th and Exchange.

The store was a complete furniture store of the day and had a tremendous stock. The store consisted of a ground floor and partial basement. It had a significant supply

of stoves and ranges; wood, gas, and electric. Sonora and Brunswick phonographs. Sealy mattresses and bedsprings. Lamps, sofas, and chairs of all kinds. Baby buggies and high chairs. Stovepipes and boards. Rugs, carpeting, and linoleum up to twelve feet wide. Toys, pots and pans, pillows, brooms, carpet sweepers, drapery goods, curtains, window shades, Kirsch [curtain] rods, bedroom sets, dining room sets, breakfast sets, unfinished furniture, and stools. If a customer bought floorcoverings, they were installed at no charge.

The store's motto on all signs and tags was "We Don't Misrepresent." All price tags had a selling price on them with the cost in a code. This code Dad inherited from the Shanahan days.

John Niemi was a partner in the store until Dad bought him out. Aunt Hilma worked there also, making drapes. Mother did too on occasion but never got paid for her time as Aunt Hilma did. John Niemi's wife Hilda sometimes worked as a seamstress on drapes.

Ohters who who worked there were: Mrs. Roman, Mrs. Hellerstad, Garda Johnson, Anna Price, Jimmy Johnson, Saima Sarpola, Mary Ranta, Tyne Poysky, and, later, Kas. I never knew whether Dad liked working with women or not.

Frank Porter and John Berry worked for Dad for many years.

Frank Porter's family was English. When England entered World War I, Frank enlisted in the English army. He was a good upholsterer and repairman. In later years he opened his own furniture store.

Johnnie Berry was one of Dad's employees who sewed twenty-seven-inch wide carpet together with a clothesline-like pulley arrangement and a hand-operated "hurdy-gurdy" egg beater type machine that sewed the edges together. The seams showed, but the main problem was to make the pattern on the carpet match. The pulleys were there to control the position. These were the days before the tack strip. All carpets had to be laboriously tacked down after stitching the carpet pieces together and cutting them to fit the room. It was called "spitting tacks" as you held the tacks in your mouth and picked them out by the hammer's magnetic part. The carpets were all woven, an expensive, slow, and tedious method of making floor coverings. According to their weaves, the principal types were: Axminster, Wilton velvet body, and Brussel. Twenty-seven-inch carpet is known as three-quarter carpets because it is three-quarters of a yard wide. Four widths of it make nine feet, so it is one reason most carpet rolls are nine feet wide.

The office was in the back of the store on the Exchange Street side, immediately over the furnace and coal bin area. The office equipment

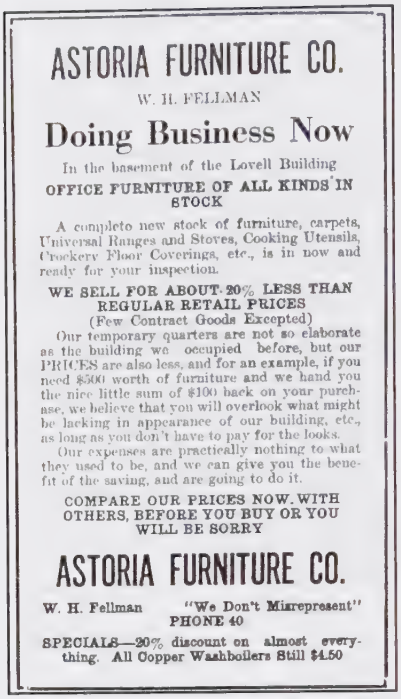
CCHS Image #2109.935

The smoldering remains of the Elks Building at the corner of Exchange and 11th Streets. The Astoria Furniture Company was housed on the first floor.

included an adding machine, an Oliver typewriter, and a bulky Cary safe.

When the store and town burned down during the fire of December of 1922, the safe fell on the winter supply of coal and lay on top of the burning coal pile for weeks before the safe could be opened and the contents removed. The books and contents were scorched but not burned. An official from the Cary Safe Co. was there for the occasion. Pictures were taken with Dad and me standing by. I had rushed down from Central school, where I was in the fifth grade, which was six blocks away, to get to the spot in front of the telephone building on Exchange St. where they had the safe. Of course, Cary Safe Co. used the picture in advertising its product.

The store's first truck was an REO Speed Wagon, with a four-cylinder engine producing thirty-five HP. It had an unusual emergency brake system with a ratchet on the clutch pedal. Dad kept it in Hildebrand's Garage across from the folk's home. The truck had primer cups on the top of three of the cylinders. The fourth had a whistle on it that operated by a cord on the wooden dash. It worked on the compression and power stroke so that when you engaged it, the truck slowed down, but it sure did shake up nearby drivers. The truck also had a cut-out in the exhaust.



ASTORIA FURNITURE CO.

W. H. FELLMAN

Doing Business Now

In the basement of the Lovell Building

OFFICE FURNITURE OF ALL KINDS IN STOCK

A complete new stock of furniture, carpets, Universal Ranges and Stoves, Cooking Utensils, Crockery Floor Coverings, etc., is in now and ready for your inspection.

WE SELL FOR ABOUT 20% LESS THAN REGULAR RETAIL PRICES

(Few Contract Goods Excepted)

Our temporary quarters are not so elaborate as the building we occupied before, but our PRICES are also less, and for an example, if you need $500 worth of furniture and we hand you the nice little sum of $100 back on your purchase, we believe that you will overlook what might be lacking in appearance of our building, etc., as long as you don't have to pay for the looks.

Our expenses are practically nothing to what they used to be, and we can give you the benefit of the saving, and are going to do it.

COMPARE OUR PRICES NOW. WITH OTHERS, BEFORE YOU BUY OR YOU WILL BE SORRY

ASTORIA FURNITURE CO.

W. H. Fellman "We Don't Misrepresent" PHONE 40

SPECIALS—20% discount on almost everything. All Copper Washboilers Still $4.50

ADVERTISEMENT FOR THE ASTORIA FURNITURE COMPANY IN THE WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 10, 1923, *DAILY ASTORIAN*, FIVE WEEKS AFTER THE OTHER STORE WAS DESTROYED BY FIRE.

FIRE

The Astoria Fire of December 6, 1922, was a terrible blow to the city and followed the Hammond Mill fire of the year before [several months before]. The sawmill fire destroyed one of the largest mills on the west coast that provided substantial economic income for the city. The 1922 fire destroyed the entire downtown business district. The rebuilding bankrupted many investors and crippled others and burdened the town with massive debts and taxes. The fire's cause was thought to have been a grease fire in the Imperial Grill early in the morning. It quickly spread to the Bee Hive Department Store next door then broke out under the wooden streets, eventually collapsing the streets onto the water mains, which broke. With the loss of water, the only way to combat the fire was with dynamite, which was done.

Mom and I watched the downtown go up in flames from the upstairs window. Kas and Dad were down at the store. They removed furniture that belonged to a customer and was there to be refinished or re-upholstered.

The weather was cold. There was snow on the ground but luckily no wind to speak of, but the fire made its own wind. When the Weinhard Hotel's entire east wall collapsed, it fell in one piece about halfway then buckled; there was a tremendous flame-up as it landed in one gigantic heap.

Kas and Dad watched the store burn. Dad threw his keys into the burning store—an unusual gesture, and laughed, Kas said.

During the fire, many people, strangers and friends, helped others save their belongings, precious and otherwise. Numerous stories have emerged from the ordeal—some tragic, some humorous. Mr. Haller had a music studio upstairs and, of course, some valuable instruments. On one trip, a party helping came down the steps, not with an instrument but a geranium pot. In another

story, in the apartment house between 14th and 15th Streets, chairs were thrown out the window, but linens were carried down the stairs. On the sad side, Norris Staples, the Model T Ford, agent, collapsed and died pushing one of his cars right in front of the Astoria Furniture Store. The news media in Portland reported Dad had died too, in a big front-page story. Later that day, I answered the front door to an *Oregonian* reporter who requested a picture of Dad from Mother. Dad, who was in the kitchen, heard this request and asked the reporter, "What do you want my picture for?"

Return to Finland

Fortunately, Dad had been a great believer in insurance, so he collected a substantial amount of fire insurance. His new building, being built on Commercial between 16th and 15th, was nearing completion when he decided to go back to Finland with Mother, Kas, and me with an all-Oregon group organized by Mr. Lindell of Portland. Kas had just graduated from high school, and I was eleven. We took the train across the country. It must have taken seven or more days with Niagara Falls as one of the stops. On riding in the open-air observation train, Dad claimed that Niagara rapids couldn't be compared to the Oulu River rapids where he was raised. A fellow was selling souvenirs, standing on the side running board of the train. His name was Dollar Bill. He wore a dollar bill as a necktie. While getting off the train, he slipped and fell into the rapids. Quick action by riders in the open car saved him from a watery grave.

We left the U.S.A. on the Swedish-American line ship *Drottningholm*, arriving in Goteborg, Sweden, about six days later. The harbor was sprinkled with the white sails of sailboats as we entered the picturesque harbor. When we were in the train station to leave for Stockholm, the tall king of Sweden walked by accompanied by an entourage of medaled military personnel. From Stockholm, we took the boat to Turku. Whereas Sweden was seemingly prosperous-looking, having sold goods and services to both sides during World War I, Finland looked drab and struggling. It was only about five years since the time the country declared its independence from Russia and just emerged from its own bloody civil war. There still were signs of the struggle, such as shell-pocked buildings. Worse, though, was the division of political parties and the animosity of those who had taken the opposite side in the struggle for freedom. Upon returning to Finland, Dad had, in the back of his mind, the thought of relocating to the country of his birth.

However, after touring the country from one end to the other, he and mother decided to return to

America. We visited a lot of different relatives, including Grandma Fellman in Grankulla. [This is an upscale area in Greater Helsinki City where the well-to-do live.] Grandma was built like a butterball, maybe five feet tall. She had two of her daughters, Dad's sisters, living with her. There was not any doubt who was the boss of the family. One warm summer day, Dad gave the pregnant lady who delivered the mail a cool lemonade-like drink and had her sit at the table on the veranda. Grandma, on hearing of it, gave Dad heck for mixing with the lower class. The university students who wore white caps and officials in various bureaucracies made it apparent that class distinction was readily recognizable—this irked Dad.

Mom had maybe a grade school education and was a daughter of a farmer. The two grown sisters, Eva and Martha, did not help much as they talked mostly in Swedish. Aunt Martha had a sweetheart, a German army veteran who kept telling her how good the German army was against the Americans in WWI.

We toured from Grankulla eastward to Viipuri, the Saimaa Canal and rapids, taking trips to Kuopio, Tamperi, to Oulu and Oululainen where Mother was raised. We visited with her relatives on the farm. Everywhere on the walls were pictures of relatives and prominently displayed men in soldier's uniforms. Nearly every house had rifles stacked, and each able-bodied man up to forty-eight years of age was in the Finnish Army Reserve. The consensus of their opinions was that someday the Russians would strike back to get back all the territory they had wrested from Swedish rule in the 1809 war and later lost. In 1923, many of the buildings in town and villages still showed artillery damage but had not been repaired as yet. On my twelfth birthday, we witnessed the midnight sun as we were far north of the Arctic Circle.

Dad and Mom had thoughts when they left the states to possibly move to Finland, but, happily for Kas and myself, they, on looking at the situation, decided to return to the United States. When we were in downtown Helsinki, we came across a Singer Sewing Machine display in a store window. The display had a backdrop of the American flag. Right there on the sidewalk, I saluted the flag, offhand-like. One could say I was homesick. The folks were amused but got the message.

In Copenhagen, the city streets were a continual stream of bicycles. Dad took Kas to a bar to taste Danish beer. Kas said the beer nearly knocked him on his ear.

The trip across the North Sea was as rough as could be. I did not get sick but got pretty close, even missing a meal, to the amusement of the rest.

All I can remember of London is visiting a notable Finnish author. She was partially blind, and her housekeeping attested to it. She had been an acquaintance of Dad's family. We saw a lot of places—the Tower of London and the famous museum where one wing alone had nothing but butterflies. Strangely enough, we met some of the others from the all-Oregon tour, right in the middle of London. We had not seen them since we debarked from the *Drottingholm* in Goteborg. Once, we listened to a radical speaker at Hyde Park criticizing the government, the officials, the king, the royalty, the parliament, and whatever he could think of. Dad asked a bobby standing nearby, "Why do you let him talk like that?" to which the bobby replied, "That's what we have this park for, so people like him can blow off steam."

The train trip north to Edinburgh and Glasgow was fast through the countryside. The small towns looked worn and untidy. The people appeared grim and severe and unhappy. No one smiled. If, in conversation, they recognized we were Americans, the folks would be asked, "Are you here to take advantage of the exchange?" The British had begun a system known as the Dole System. The idea of it was to pay people subsistence while they were unemployed. Dad said at the time, "If it ever comes to the U.S., it will ruin the country."

World War I had impoverished the British Isle, liquidating the flower of its youth as well as its finances. Dad said it was the beginning of the end of the British Empire.

We left Glasgow on White Starline's ship, the *Cameronia*. We stopped for passengers at Londonderry, Ireland, and in five days arrived in New York. We crossed North America through Canada by train. What I can remember most were the endless wheat fields and occasional silo. We visited our folks' friends in Seattle. The friends tried to interest the folks in settling in Seattle, but they decided to return to Astoria, which is what we did.

Back in the USA

The burned stubble of pilings was all that remained of the big Hammond Sawmill, but downtown Astoria was bustling with construction. The town debt, plus the county's indebtedness caused by the port dock construction before the fire, made taxes exceedingly high. Despite these burdens, merchants rebuilt fine, modern fire-proof buildings and were convinced of Astoria's rosy future. Dad bought out M. M. Nelson's furniture store for the second time and began the Fellman Department Store, where the J. C. Penney Company is now on Commercial Street.

CCHS IMAGE 8048.903

Fellman's Department Store was located near the Southwest corner of 14th and Commercial Streets. This image taken during a firetruck demonstration.

About this time, Dad was appointed Finnish Consul to the U.S. for Oregon. This is an honorary position but entails representing any Finnish citizen within the confines of the consul district. There is a considerate amount of paperwork besides functions to attend with financial benefits connected to the position. One of the local papers, either the *Morning Astorian* or the *Evening Budget*, wrote an article with the headline, "Does W. H. Fellman have to give up his American citizenship to be a Consul of Finland?"

It seemed as if during these days, there was always some kind of controversy going on. While Dad had this store, he was on the Astoria School Board. Because of the high amount of indebtedness of the community and funds were at a minimum, the school superintendent, Mr. Strange, and board members Attorney E. E. Gray, Al Norblad, and Dad were faced with the position of cutting teacher's salaries. The teachers responded by calling on Dad, the most vulnerable of board members. They told him to see they got their due salary or else they would boycott his store. The other board members did not have to be so concerned. Dad was furious. Today one would say he was in a "catch-22" position. Another time Dad was approached at the store by Bill O'Brian, the mill owner, to use his influence to get his daughter, Elizabeth, a teaching job. The O'Brian family were strong Catholics. Their children attended Catholic School.

As Bill O'Brian was walking out the back door, an envoy of the Ku Klux Klan walked in the front door and told Dad that if public schools were not good enough for Elizabeth to go to, she shouldn't be allowed to teach in them. Dad was furious. It was not always bad. Tyne Poysky, a graduate of the University of Washington, worked for the store as a billing clerk. One day Dad told her to go see Syn't Strange [?]. He arranged for her to teach in her profession. Later, Tyne moved to Monterey, California, and received additional schooling at the University of California, Berkeley. She also taught at Monterey, where she met Jack Harris, her husband.

Business Declines

The building that Dad had constructed on Commercial St. through to Duane between 15th and 16th became empty as Nyquist Motors failed. Dad decided to move the Department store there, which turned out to be a business mistake. Although, over normal times, the store would have succeeded.

Prior to this time, Freeland Bros. of Portland moved their tabletop manufacturing business to the Astoria Port docks. Frank Patton, who had the Astoria Savings Bank, had loaned the Freelands money.

Image courtesy of Jane Harmer

The Fellmans: Helena, Werner, and sons, Paavo and Kasten

They were failing, and Dad was asked if he was interested in taking over the firm, which he did. The firm was renamed the Fellman Furniture Mfg. Co. Inc. One Freeland was superintendent of the plant and the other a salesman on the road. Although it did not make a profit in its short years of existence, its prospects for the future looked good. In the meantime, it employed some seventy-five to one hundred people.

Dad had a relative who immigrated to the U.S. and located in the Astoria area. His name was Olaf Fellman, a cousin. Olaf married, and they had two children, a girl Martha, and a son Lennart. Both were younger than me. Olaf was a commercial fisherman. He took me gillnetting with him a few times. His wife was an excellent cook and helped mother when Fellman's department had a restaurant in it. When Dad had the furniture factory going at the Port docks, Olaf instigated a strike. To say that Dad was a bit on the miffed side is putting it mildly. The Olaf Fellman family lived in the Fern Hill district.

Dad had mortgaged his store and obligated his finances to the Astoria Savings Bank to back his venture. Over the years, the plant had expanded, enlarged with new equipment and machinery. One of the reasons it had expanded was that it had big initial orders from Montgomery-Ward's, which had decided to open a chain of retail stores for the Ward furniture departments. What Ward wanted was similar furniture the plant already made, but at a cheaper price. In order to do that, the quality would have decreased. For instance, the finish of the furniture required seven steps. Wards told Dad to put it all in one operation. Dad told him the finish would not hold up and insisted the buyer sign the contract and to include Dad's objection with no responsibility to the plant. The next year when it came time for the contract to be resumed, Ward's demanded a cheaper price since the plant was set-up to their specifications, and the learning curve should show a down-trend in costs. Dad refused, and the Ward account was lost. The lesson from this was never have your manufacturing output dependent on a single customer. If you have a multitude of customers scattered all over the Western states, you will not lose them all in one day. So, if a plant sacrifices many smaller customers for one large one, that one can then dictate to the manufacturer what he will pay and how much he will buy. Also, it takes a long time to get the old smaller customers back. Usually, they are much more loyal to firms they have done business with and much less apt to change vendors.

[Part of this history is missing. The following paragraph is recounted by the transcriber from

an oral history by Mr. Fellman's grandson.]

Bank Failure

Mr. Norblad, attorney for both the bank and Mr. Fellman, convinced Mr. Fellman it was his duty to try to bail out the bank by signing over his holdings to the bank. Mrs. Fellman had recommended Mr. Fellman consult another attorney, but he refused. When the bank failed, the Fellman's were ruined financially. They elected to move to Aberdeen, Washington and began business anew. The last night the Fellmans were in Astoria, they stayed in a hotel. Mrs. Fellman was very angry that none of her three sisters came to say good-bye to her. She never spoke to them again. Mr. Norblad went on to become the Governor of Oregon. At the time of the Fellman business failure, Kas was the manager of the furniture store. Mr. Fellman did not tell Kas that the store had been taken over by the bank. Kas reported for work the next morning and found his keys would no longer open the door. The night before, Mrs. Fellman and her son Paavo had gone to the store to take some clothing for themselves. Mr. Fellman was terribly angry that they had done so, believing all the merchandise belonged to the bank.

Move to Grays Harbor

When a Finnish freighter entered Grays Harbor, there were certain formalities in which the Finnish consul was involved. One of them was to represent a sailor should he get involved with American law. A few cases occurred that Dad was involved in—mostly fights, drunks, missing the ship's departure, and hospitalization. So, all-in-all, it was an interesting time for the folks, and they appeared to be more content together than they were in the latter years in Astoria.

Mom and I made homebrew, so there was always something to drink around the house. (Prohibition was in effect from 1919 to 1933). Kas, his wife, Lillian, and their children, Barbara Sue, and Bob visited us quite often from Seattle, where Kas worked. The folks were overjoyed each time to greet their grandchildren, as well as Kas and Lill. At this time, the Grays Harbor Jr. College was established in an old condemned school building on W. Market St., and I decided to attend. The tuition was something like $25.00 a quarter. I instantly had a host of friends and acquaintances as I turned out for football too. I continued to work in the store, so my time was limited for studying. [Mr. Fellman had opened a new furniture store in Aberdeen.] Being forced to organize my time, I re-

ceived my best grades during that period. It was 1930.

The country's economy was continuing to decline, especially so in the Grays Harbor area, where nearly every business' health depended upon the lumber industry. Still, with the low overhead and the family-run store, the folks continued to remain solvent. Whenever days were really bad, Mother would go out and buy good meat and fix a real good meal. "To keep up your strength," she would say.

Werner H. Fellman	*1881–1954*
Helena Fellman	*1880–1966*
Kasten R. Fellman	*1904–1993*
Paavo (Paul) W. Fellman	*1911–2003*

Astoria High School Zephyrus

Paavo Fellman, 1929
Astoria High School senior photo.

Paavo's son Bill Fellman recalled this story about his grandfather...

Grandpa had one of the first cars in Astoria. The day after he bought the car one of his neighbors bought the same car and drove by grandpa's furniture store waving at grandpa. Grandpa waived back. The neighbor went around the block and waived at grandpa again. Grandpa thought to himself "Ok, Ok I've seen you and your new car." When the neighbor circled the block for the third time and began waiving at Grandpa, Grandpa noticed that he was not waiving but motioning him to come to him. Grandpa ran alongside the car and jumped on to the running board. It was then that the neighbor turned to Grandpa and said "How do you turn this damn thing off?"

Two weeks at Bumble Bee

By Laura Penner Torres

In 1979 I had just graduated from Astoria High School, gotten married, and was looking for work. The biggest employer at the time was the Bumble Bee Cannery, so I went in and applied. This was the perfect location because I lived in an apartment just up the hill on Alameda, and I could walk to work. They signed me up, issued me a white apron, hair net, and a knife with a white plastic handle. It was really sharp. I was inducted with several other people in matching white aprons, hairnets, and knives.

During the orientation, they warned us to be careful of being stuck with a fishbone, as it would be the end of us. Apparently, a stick from a fishbone caused a nasty infection. I began to have doubts right then that this was the place for me.

They led us out to a long gleaming stainless steel table with a conveyor belt and showed us how to remove the skin from the cooked tuna with the knife. There was a "cat food" hole where the skin, bones, and guts went and a belt where the "good" fish went. I had been working for a while when I noticed on the far side of the plant a line of small older ladies, speaking Finnish, were lined up and working faster than anyone else in the place. I was amazed at how fast they could clean a fish. When I asked the girl next to me who they were, she said they were the old-timers who were getting paid by the piece. So the faster they cleaned, the more money they made. I was sure I could never go as fast as they were going. They could clean about eight fish to my one. Clearly, I was not very good at this.

So I'm working away, going as fast as I can, and this really loud buzzer goes off, scaring the hell out of me. I thought it was some kind of air-raid siren and that we were being attacked, but no, it was just break time. Everyone in the place dropped what they were doing and rushed for the break room. We had 10 minutes to get coffee, have a snack, sit down and then be back at our station when the second buzzer went off at the end of the break. Ok, so that was the second sign letting me know that maybe this isn't the right place for me. It sure had its moments of panic and excitement.

The fish smell inside the plant wasn't that bad; in fact, it was ok. It smelled of cooked fish and not the slippery, fishy smell you might expect. I discovered it wasn't so bad because huge fans were pumping the smell out, which is why the whole area of Uniontown smelled

CCHS Image #12421.330

The cutting line at the Bumble Bee Cannery.

of fish when they brought in a load and began cooking it. I remember going home at night, and everyone around me would look at me and plug their noses. I smelled horrible!! The fish smell was wafting everywhere around me, like Pigpen in the Peanuts cartoon. I didn't think I would ever get the smell out. My house smelled, all my clothes smelled, my hair smelled, it seemed to soak into everything. Clue three that it wasn't for me.

I had been working for a week when the supervisor came up to me and asked if I wanted to try a different station. I was game. They took me to the head of the table that I was working on and told me I would be removing the head and tail from the fish for the cleaners down the line. There were three other people already doing this. I suspected they noticed that I was so slow at skinning the fish they needed to have me do something else. It was easy work. They would dump a bunch of fish on the table. I twisted the head and tail off, putting them in the cat food hole, and slid the bodies onto the conveyor. After a while, it got really boring, and the other guys on the table started a game. The fish was cooked whole before it was processed, so it was slightly warm. As we pulled off the head and tail, the cooked white eyeballs would pop out of the heads and roll around the table. We began flicking them back and forth like a gross game of marbles. It enlivened the day a bit.

We would sometimes get a load of fish on the table that had no smell. That was strange, so I asked what was up. I was told that sometimes the fish was old when it came into the plant, so they would treat it with formaldehyde to eliminate the bad smells. I have no idea if that was true or not; that is just what I was told.

After a couple of weeks of working, I was finally going to receive my first paycheck. I was so excited because I knew I had rent to pay and needed to get some groceries. I was handed my check, and it was for $25. They had taken $25 for union dues. WHAT?? I didn't know that this was something I had to pay for. They may have explained it in the orientation, but I didn't realize that it would be so much. Remember this was in 1979 when the minimum wage was $2.30 an hour. That was the final straw; I quit—I kept the knife.

Past issues of the *Cumtux* are now available for viewing and research purposes. A link to the *Internet Archive*, where they are stored, can be found on the Research & Collections page of the CCHS web site at ***https://astoriamuseums.org/explore/research-collections***. Once there, select the Internet Archive button in the box on the right, then, on the *Internet Archive* page, select the *Cumtux* collection. From there you browse or search the entire collection currently available on the site.

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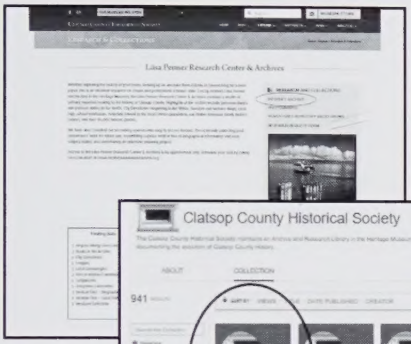

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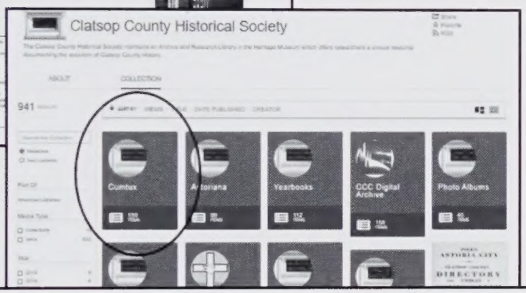

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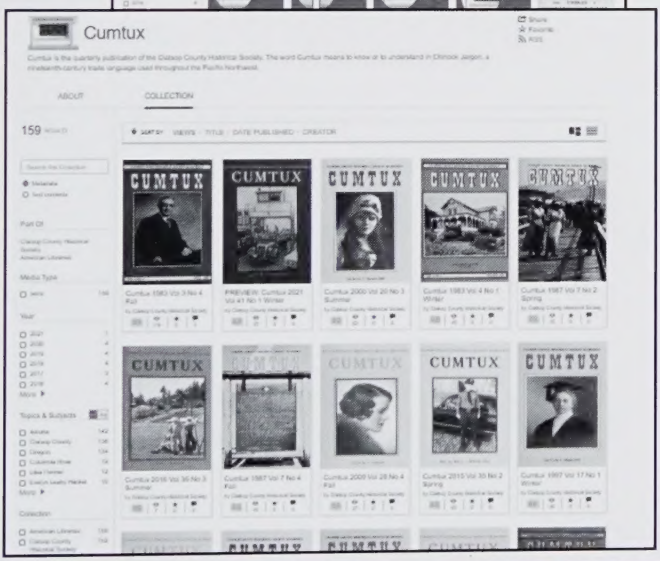

Courtesy of Brian Nice

"The Alley"
A water color by Georgia Heckbert, 1928. Showing Flavel Street in Astoria.